

COVID-19 disease and cost burden especially high among older adults, particularly those of color

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A retrospective observational study found that the COVID-19 disease burden among adults aged 65 years or older was substantially higher than in the general U.S. population, especially among those of non-White race/ethnicity. The findings are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used Medicare claims data for 28.1 million fee-for-service beneficiaries to examine the characteristics and medical costs of [older adults](#) who were diagnosed with COVID-19 from April through December 2020. The data showed that the [hospitalization rate](#) was more than 60 times higher, and the mortality rate was 2.5 times higher (4.2%) for older adults compared to the general population. The average cost per COVID-19-related hospitalization was considerable (\$21,752) among those older adults, but the costs of COVID-19-related hospitalization decreased with age for the 5 medical outcomes considered. According to the authors, possible reasons include higher mortality rates among [older patients](#), resulting in [shorter hospital stays](#) and lower costs

(inpatient length of stay was shorter among patients aged ≥ 75 years than among those aged 65 to 74 years); the lower likelihood of younger adults to become seriously ill (those who reached the point of hospitalization may have had substantial risks and complications); and less aggressive care with increasing age.

The data also showed that people of color accounted for a disproportionate share of hospitalizations and deaths during the pandemic. Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander older adults had higher probability of death and receiving ventilator support during hospitalization than non-Hispanic White patients. This finding highlights the importance of identifying effective strategies to promote COVID-19 vaccine uptake among non-White persons aged 65 years or older to mitigate the increased disease and economic burden.

More information: Study:

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-1102>

Editorial:

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